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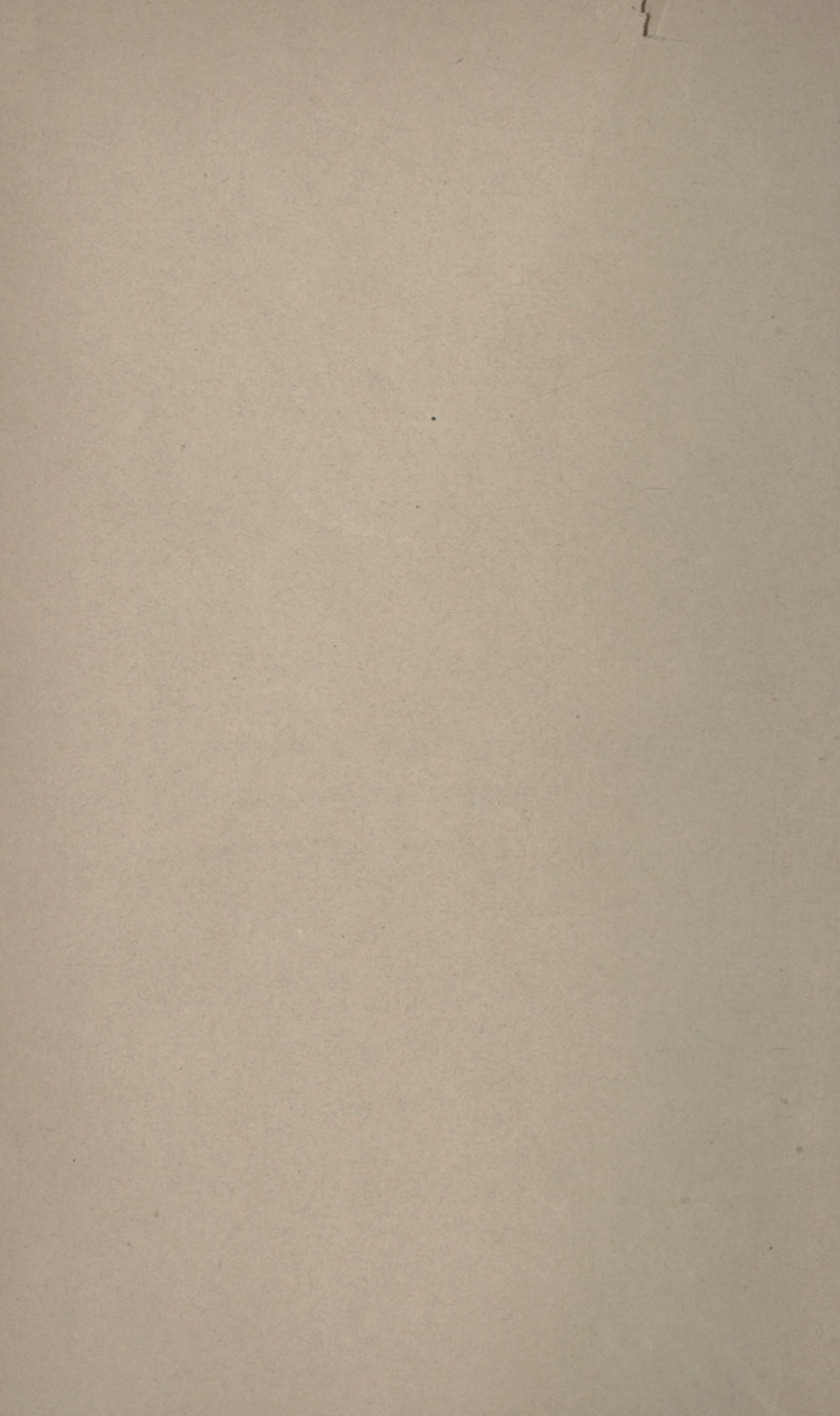
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Chloe with huge iron-rimmed spectacles was slowly spelling out a chapter in the Bible.

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BLIND RUTH

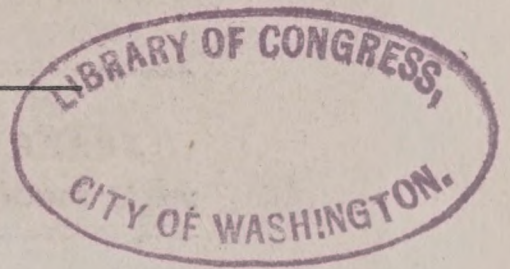
OR

HOW MAY I DO GOOD?

ILLUSTRATING

THE SECOND PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,

"THY KINGDOM COME."



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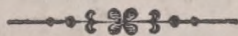
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BLIND RUTH,

OR

HOW MAY I DO GOOD?



CHAPTER I.

IN a deep recess made by the large bay window of a beautiful mansion in the country, two persons were seated, apparently absorbed by the lovely prospect that was spread out before them.

Ellen Dale was the niece of Mrs. May, and was to be her companion for a few weeks, during the temporary absence of the head of the household, who, his presence becoming necessary in a business

transaction, had been called rather suddenly from his pleasant home.

“You are very silent this evening, Ellie,” said Mrs. May, as she turned toward her young companion. “If I did not think you were like myself quietly enjoying the beauties of this twilight hour, I should say you were homesick. But to me there is a pensive sadness in this closing hour of day, which subdues the world-feeling within us, leads us to calm and holy thoughts, and brings us more closely into communion with the God and Father of our spirits. See those silver-lined clouds, how softly they float along like light falls of snow upon the fading blue of the skies; whilst the whole western horizon is lit up with masses of every shape and hue, throwing their tinges of glory on the hills and distant

woodlands, until they are all aglow with light and beauty."

"It is lovely," said Ellen, springing up from her recumbent attitude, and looking out for a few moments to gather in the particulars of her companion's description; "but in truth my thoughts were far enough away from it just now, although I am not in the least homesick. But I began to think a while ago how useless a creature I am in the world; and then dear cousin Gracie came into my mind, and I wished that like her I could be a missionary, and instruct the benighted heathen."

"I wish so too, Ellie," said Mrs. May; "at least I would like to see you have a true missionary spirit; yet I should be very sorry if the opportunity were offered to you now of becoming a foreign mis-

sionary, even to follow in the bright track made by the gentle footsteps of your cousin Grace."

"I am surprised to hear you say so, aunt May; I always thought you were devoted to the missionary cause."

"And so I certainly am, dear Ellie. None can honour and admire more than I the self-denying spirit of the men, who, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, have gone forth to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the heathen. And still more do I appreciate those admirable women, who, sacrificing their home affections on the altar of duty, have steadily set their faces thither; though the bones of their devoted sister-band whiten the missionary field from the burning climes of India, to the sunny streams that roll over 'Afric's golden

sands.' To me it is deeply affecting to look over the vast space which covers the lands of the nations that sit in the region of the shadow of death, and behold here and there those feeble lights of the gospel ministry, shining, in the deep gloom which surrounds them, 'like pearls upon an Ethiop's brow.' Yet, my dear Ellie, I told you but the truth when I said, I would not wish to see you *now* become a foreign missionary."

"But you will give me your reasons, dear aunt. You have generally seemed pleased when I have even expressed a desire to do some good, and I have so often had cousin Grace held up to me for a model, that I thought I could not be wrong in trying to imitate her example."

"I will have to be very frank with you then, my dear Ellie. I said that I would

be pleased to find that you have a missionary spirit, for without that a missionary life would be an unhappy one, and it does not insure it to those who enter on it from improper motives. Now you, my dear niece, are young and impulsive. You have but lately found the answer to that important question—"What shall I do to be saved?" and with the early love of a young convert, you are seeking to do some great thing for Christ. If I am not mistaken, the romance of a sweet cottage on a sunny shore, the waving of lofty palm-trees, and the aromatic breath of the land of spices, have charms for your imagination, which the every day realities of a missionary's toilsome life would soon dissipate. By a true missionary spirit, then, I mean such a love for the souls of the lost ones around us, as will lead us to

do all in our power for their spiritual good. We are not all called to go far away to the heathen, although we can in many ways administer to the comfort of those who do ; but there are benighted objects all around us who need our assistance, and while we are aiding these we are in fact helping on the great work of the Lord ; and uniting in that universal spread of the gospel which we pray for when we utter the petition, "Thy kingdom come."

"Well then, aunt May, how shall I do good ? You say you would be glad to have me show a missionary spirit. Please to tell me then some of the objects which call for it."

"In the first place, my dear Ellie, you seem to me to be wanting in that tender compassion for the lowly and destitute,

which carries such a charm with it, and inclines them so much more gratefully to the efforts made for their spiritual good. I should hardly have thought of you as being willing to become a missionary to a vile and degraded race, after seeing your ungracious behaviour in the stage yesterday to the poor but neatly clad passengers who claimed the benefit of the same public conveyance."

"Well, but aunt May, you surprised me quite as much; for you spent half your time in taking notice of that common-looking woman's baby, who sat on the seat opposite. It was so fretful, and so ill dressed that I could not bear to look at it; and yet a little further down there was the sweetest little creature I ever saw, with such a beautiful pink cashmere sack on, and a white plumed hat. But I don't think you even noticed it."

“Yes I did,” said Mrs. May, smiling; “but your little beauty had so many admirers, that I thought I would turn my attention to the poor neglected baby, and its sad, weary-looking young mother. I can assure you that I was quite repaid by the smiles of the child, and the grateful countenance of the poor woman; while you, I think, might have been pleased to be freed from the annoyance of its constant fretting.”

“So I would have been,” returned Ellen, “if I had not been quite as much vexed by your entering into conversation with that low-looking girl at your side, who carried a bundle and a band-box. Why, aunt May, I don’t think she was anything but a servant girl.”

“So she was indeed, Ellie,” said her aunt quietly; “but had you heard as I

did her simple tale of sorrow, and seen the tears coursing down her really honest face, you would have felt pity and not contempt for the poor homeless stranger. Not being in want of a domestic myself, I gave her a few lines to a friend of mine, who I know needs one very much; and thus in a short ride I had the satisfaction of feeling that I had made more than one heart glad. How many can you reckon up, Ellie?"

"Not one," said her niece, frankly; "not even my own, aunt May; for I could not help thinking I looked hatefully proud; and was all the time imagining the contrast between my ill humoured countenance, and the sweet benevolence of yours."

"You might draw a higher comparison, my child. Christ, our example, when

he came on earth, had his birth place in a stable, and his habitation among the poor and lowly of the earth. He has also chosen many of these to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of glory ; and if we are his true followers, we must accept the legacy he left us of the despised ones of the earth, whensoever we will to do them good. Every act of charity, even the look or word of kindness, becomes the cup of cold water, which, if bestowed on the least of his disciples, is claimed by the Saviour as being done unto him. But if you want to take pattern from any lower standard, I will instance one, who, for improvement of the most limited means, excels many others in the luxury of doing good. If there is a pure missionary spirit in existence, it has blind Ruth for its living example."

“Not blind!” exclaimed Ellen. “Why I always thought blind people were helpless, and dependent for happiness on others. I am sure I should be. But has she no other name to call her by?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. May, “but she is more frequently spoken of by the one that marks her peculiar affliction, as it distinguishes her from others who bear that sweet but sorrowful name. Her family designation is Ellison. You have been so long absent among your northern friends, my dear Ellie, that I suppose you have forgotten many of the scenes with which you were once familiar. But when you were a very little girl, and spending your holidays here, you used to love to accompany me in my visits to Grandmother Ellison’s cottage.”

“Oh, yes; and I have often thought

of those nice Saturday afternoon walks. She lived in a romantic little spot, just between the old mill and the school-house, and kept bees and flowers. I remember yet the lessons upon thrift you used to teach me from the little busy bodies I was so curious about, nor have I forgotten what was, I suppose, much more to my taste then, the delicious bread and honey with which the old lady used to sweeten your exhortations. But I am sorry she has become blind. She must be very helpless in her old age."

"She is not blind," said Mrs. May, "not more so at least than most aged people; and yet she is dependent for much of her happiness, strange as it may appear to you, upon one who is bereft of the blessing of sight. Ruth is quite young, orphaned, except by the one tie of her

venerable grandmother. Her father, Ralph Ellison, found a sailor's grave in the bosom of the stormy ocean; and his heart-broken wife, after leaving the infant Ruth to the kind care of her husband's mother, followed him to the world of spirits. Many blamed the old lady for taking such a helpless child to be, as they supposed, a burden to her; for, as if to mark the deep affliction of the mother, the little babe, who was destined never to see its father's face, was born entirely blind. But sweet Ruth has never been a burden. On the contrary, she is the light and life of her grandmother's dwelling. She is an ardent and sincere young christian, and I would gladly see you make her acquaintance, and learn from her how to do good as you have opportunity. As to-morrow is the last day of

the week, and you retain such pleasant recollections of Saturday afternoon walks, I think I will ask you to accompany me to the old memory-place, and see whether it has lost any of its interest."

"I shall be delighted," said Ellen, "but where are you going now, dear aunt?" she added, as she saw Mrs. May preparing to leave their pleasant nook. "This beautiful moonlight throwing the shadows of the stirring leaves upon the floor, is just what you love, I know, for I have often heard you say so."

"I must make my pleasures yield to duty just now, my dear. It has been my custom for some time past to devote an hour or two in the evening to the improvement of those who are busy in my employ through the day. Last night it was neglected, because I was so soon to

part with your uncle ; but I must not allow my indolence to interfere with it a second time."

"Dear auntie, then you will leave this cool nice parlour, and go out to be heated to death in that stifling kitchen!"

"Not heated to death, Ellie ; do not use such startling expressions. And surely the sacrifice is not greater than you would be called to make if you were a missionary in the burning climes of the torrid zone. But you can remain here if you choose, and dream out the pictures which your imagination has sketched so beautifully."

"No, dear aunt May, I am reprovèd already. I will go with you, and assist you, if I can, in doing good to others. Ah ! I fear I have but little of a missionary spirit."

Good old Chloe, who presided over the culinary department in Mrs. May's household, would have little relished the epithet "stifling" bestowed upon her tidy kitchen. The cooking range had been allowed to cool down, until its temperature very slightly affected the air of the room, and two large open windows freely admitted the soft breath of evening and the silvery light of the moon. A neat dresser with shining rows of earthenware rather added a charm to the picture, because it was one of the characteristics of the place; and the home-made list carpet that covered the floor gave an appearance of comfort to the whole.

The little party of domestics consisting of the old woman and a younger one, besides a boy of fifteen, all of African descent, were already waiting for the usual

visit of their kind teacher. Mrs. May, with her accustomed thoughtfulness, had provided a cheap shaded lamp for the convenience of her evening scholars, and beneath its subdued and mellow light their employments proceeded quite pleasantly.

But Ellen Dale could not help thinking that there was some considerable self-denial to be practised even under the nice arrangements by which she was surrounded ; and she thought that her gentle aunt May, as she bent over old Chloe, who, with huge iron-rimmed spectacles pressing back the frill of her snow white cap, was slowly spelling out a chapter in the Bible, was as truly a missionary as those who leave home and friends to labour among the heathen. She remained so long considering the subject,

that she had almost forgotten the part she had promised to take in the instructions of the evening, until an admonitory look from her aunt reminded her. With great alacrity she then began to set copies for Thomas, the coloured boy, who was already able to read with considerable fluency, and having initiated him into the mysteries of pot hooks and hangers, she proceeded to assist the younger female with her lesson.

Susan was delighted to be taught by the strange lady, and could not keep from smiling even while she was reading; but she made so many ludicrous mistakes that Ellen could scarcely retain her gravity, and she had to look at her aunt's placid countenance many times before she could entirely settle her own.

She did succeed however, and had

begun to take quite an interest in her sable scholars before it was time to close. When the hour of retiring arrived, Mrs. May said she thought it right to attend to their usual devotional exercises, although the head of the household was absent; and signified her willingness to lead those services which it was their privilege at that season to engage in. Her little circle having arranged their books and slates, and seated themselves in attitudes of attention, she commenced reading to them the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, as an appropriate close to the conversation she had that evening held with her young companion, Ellen Dale. She also added such simple explanations as she thought necessary for the instruction of her auditors, who were as yet but little advanced in the know-

ledge of divine things. When she had finished the two interesting parables, which are calculated so deeply to probe the hearts of those who profess godliness, and had entered upon that description of the time "when the Son of man shall come in his glory," her voice took a richer tone, and she finished the sublime passage with a feeling of solemnity which was shared by her attentive listeners. Then, kneeling down, she besought Him, "who hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth," to enable each one so to live to his glory, that having secured for themselves the promise of the purchased inheritance, they might work for his blessed cause, until the kingdom of darkness should be destroyed, and the kingdom of glory extended over all the earth.

CHAPTER II.

“I HAVE received one missionary lesson,” said Ellen Dale, as she entered her aunt’s breakfast parlour the next morning, “and I suppose I must wait until afternoon before I can look for a second. I am not sure whether it is the desire to become acquainted with this blind Ruth of whom you talk so much, or that I am longing for a renewal of old associations in one of my favourite walks, but I certainly feel very impatient for our visit. What do you intend doing with yourself, aunt May, all this long morning?”

“It will not be long to me, for I shall be busy,” said Mrs. May, glancing smi-

lingly toward a little group of children, who were examining together a large book of prints. "Mary, and Emma, and little Sophy will take care that the time shall not pass by unoccupied, and even baby Harry claims a great deal of attention."

"But Harry must not come into school any more if he disturbs us, must he, mamma?" said Mary, a fine, intelligent-looking girl of ten, "the last time he was there I could not understand my sums; and you said he made your head ache too, mamma."

"Yes, but Harry promised not to do so again, sister," said Emma, who seemed much more gentle than the elder, "and when mamma told him she was not well, he put up his little cart, and was so good and quiet."

“You are right to plead for your little brother, Emmy,” said her cousin Ellen, smoothing back the soft hair from the forehead of the child, and stooping to kiss her fair cheek; “but here comes Harry to speak for himself—the bright, dear little fellow!” she added, as the smiling boy came bounding in, full of life and gladness, followed by his nurse, a neat, good-tempered looking young woman, who seemed to have some difficulty in restraining his wild gambols.

But little Harry had reached the goal of his ambition, and, clambering on the lap of his mother, pressed many kisses from his rosy lips on her gentle brow. Sweet maternal love! how pure a fountain stirred beneath those dimpled fingers, and that little fluttering heart!

“Harry can plead his own cause,” said

Mrs. May, when she had placed him in his high chair at the table, and they had commenced their morning repast; “but I will take care that you shall not be annoyed again, Mary. He is a very young scholar to be sure; but yet I wish him to become used by degrees to the restraint of school discipline, and he will learn to be quiet and orderly in imitation of the rest.”

“Then we must all be good and quiet too, I suppose, mamma,” said little Sophy; “for if he sees us laughing at any of his tricks, he will try to keep us in fun all the time.”

“That is a very wise remark of my little Sophy’s. If we wish to have others be good, we must try not to lead them astray. And as you are next in age to Harry, you must strive, my love, to be a little model for his imitation.”

The two elder children were quite amused with the idea of merry, mirth-loving little Sophy being set up as an example of order to Harry; but the child herself seemed as if she was determined to merit the title, and continued to take her breakfast with such a forced gravity of countenance as entirely to upset that of the rest.

“And now, my dear children,” said Mrs. May, when they were about to leave the room, “I shall expect to see you in your places with lessons prepared, when I ring my little bell an hour hence. This morning you remember is allotted to preparation for the Sabbath-school exercises of to-morrow, and I would like you to have your verses and questions quite perfect, so that I may spend a greater portion of the time in explaining them to

you. As you are required to use diligence in your other studies through the week, I hope you will not give me cause to complain of you in these more important branches of that heavenly knowledge which is to make you wise unto eternal life."

"But, dear aunt May," said Ellen, after the children had left them, "do you not become tired of this constant succession of duties ? I have often thought I should like to teach for a little while ; but I think I should weary of it presently."

"I were more than mortal if I did not, Ellie. Sometimes I must confess I feel quite unfitted for my labours. Often I have the headache, as Mary says, and the playful mirth of my little noisy boy quivers through every nerve. At times too I seem as if I would like my ease

best, or I have other occupations which I would choose, but I am thankful that I have been enabled to go on through all these difficulties; and if the waywardness or dulness of my young scholars has sometimes discouraged me, yet I must confess the pleasures overbalance the pains."

"And now for the pleasures," said Ellen. "I must confess you have summed up such a formidable amount on the other side, that I shall expect some very weighty considerations on this."

"And so there are, my dear niece. In the first place, there is that peace of conscience which results from a knowledge that we are pursuing the strait path of duty—that we are striving to overcome the corrupt propensities of the flesh and spirit. In the next is the plea-

sure of having my children around me, growing in knowledge and usefulness by the efforts which God enables me to make, and gives me strength to perform. That I may keep them with me, watch over their habits and dispositions, and check the native evil in its very bud, are certainly inducements for me to continue my system of home education. I might mention the salutary effect upon my own temper and conduct, by the necessity that is laid upon me of exercising a habit of patience and forbearance; but I will sum up by a still higher motive for perseverance in this course of daily duty—the looking forward to that good fruit springing up from these feeble efforts, which shall by God's blessing result in the eternal welfare of the dear ones he has given me."

“Aunt May,” said Ellen, after a few moments’ pause, “do you not think I should sooner have become a true christian, if I had known what it was to have the teachings of a good, pious mother?”

“We cannot tell that, Ellie, since ‘it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.’ Many pious parents have to mourn over the waywardness of their offspring after all their efforts for their conversion, and many have gone down to their graves sorrowing over wicked and rebellious children. But in general God does please to bless their labours, and we often see their fruit in after years, although it seemed for a time entirely to fail. But if you were an orphan, dear Ellie, you had many other kind friends who were solicitous for the welfare of your soul.”

“Yes,” said Ellen, thoughtfully; “and you, dear aunt May, and cousin Grace were the kindest of all, for you talked to me *personally* about religion. Oh! if pious people only knew how straight it goes to the heart of the young to invite them *personally* and *individually* to come to Jesus! I heard many general invitations, but I took them as things of course, and they passed over my hard heart like pebbles on the frozen surface of the lake; but you took right hold of me and led me to the foot of the cross.”

“Dear child!” said Mrs. May, as she wiped away her quickly falling tears. “But if we were the happy instruments of bringing you there, it was his love and tender compassion that constrained you to come, and to him be all the glory. Yet, Ellie, if you experienced not the

care of a tender and pious mother, you have the happiness of knowing that she did care for you, and in your unconscious infancy devoted you to the Lord. Many times has she told me of this ; and when her feeble voice was almost lost in death, she laid her trembling hand upon your forehead, and looked up, as if she implored the blessing of a covenant God upon her fatherless babe, soon to be motherless also.”

“ They had told me of this,” said Ellen, “ and I never forgot it. It seemed as if that gentle hand was ever laid upon my head. I felt it when I tried the round of worldly pleasures, and it sunk like lead upon my heart. I felt it leading me back again when I went astray ; and though I am often wayward and erring, yet I bless God for that soft hand

which was laid in dying love upon my infant head."

"It is indeed a great blessing to have pious parents," said Mrs. May; "and a mother, being more especially the nurse and companion of the child, exerts an influence which is not lost when it is called forth into the strife and toil of the busy world. Where should we look for the commencement of that life of faith shown forth in the bright examples of the prophet Samuel, the evangelist Timothy, the pious Augustin, or the gifted Doddridge and Newton, if we do not trace it to a mother's prayers and a mother's labours?"

"And where shall I find a better lesson on a missionary spirit than is given me by my aunt May?" said Ellen, as some hours after she left the interesting

group of mother and children, and went to seek the retirement of her own room ; “it is true christian love that prompts her to the work ; and patience and self-denial are in full exercise.”

CHAPTER III.

IN the afternoon Mrs. May, with Ellen and the three little girls, set out on their walk, accompanied by Martha, the nurse, and her lively young charge. Mary and Emma had both promised to take turns in helping Martha draw the little basket carriage, but they had so many races to run with "cousin Ellie," and so many objects to draw their attention, that they had accomplished more than half the distance before they recollected their bargain. Springing up from the green bank, where they had thrown themselves to gather moss and painted cups from the edge of the brook, they turned back to meet the

more quiet members of the party, whom they had left far behind.

Mary gained the race first, with bonnet only detained by the ribbons which clung to her neck ; and her cousin with little Emma, finding the victory decided, determined to remain where they were.

“ See, cousin Ellie, I have found some late violets for mamma,” said the child, “ and a beautiful blue flower here all shaded with green leaves. Can you tell me what it is called, cousin ? ”

“ Yes,” said Ellen, “ but I think it is late too, perhaps from having been covered up and sheltered, for it is generally found in the early spring. It is called *Houstonia cerulea*, Emmy ; but if you find that too hard a name, it has another more common one—Innocence.”

“ Oh, thank you, that is very much

prettier. I shall always remember it by that name. Mamma says we must learn lessons from the flowers. These remind me of the hymn I learned this morning. Would you like to hear me say it, cousin Ellie ?”

“ Yes, dear,” said her cousin, “ I should indeed ;” and modestly casting down her eyes, lovely little Emma May repeated those simple and touching lines :

“ The flowers of the field,
That quickly fade away,
May well to us a lesson yield,
Who die as soon as they.
Just like an early rose,
I’ve seen an infant bloom ;
But death perhaps before it blows,
Will sweep it to the tomb.
Then let us think on death,
While we are young and gay ;
For God who gave our life and breath,
Can take them soon away.”

As the little party proceeded on their way, the brook gradually widened into a considerable stream, and the noisy clacking of the great mill wheel was heard long before they gained a view of the building. It was quite a picturesque old mill, and had originally been planned to have flyers to catch the wind, but they were either broken away or had never been added, and the belfry-looking appendage on the summit, which was designed to fasten them to, was decayed, and overgrown with large patches of green moss. The low door was wide open, but the fact that no person was visible within or without, seemed to add a mysterious charm to the ruined building, as if its machinery moved on with its monotonous hum without human agency.

Ellen stopped, and clapped her hands in ecstasy.

“There is the dear old mill, at last,” she said. “How often I have pictured it in my dreams, and sketched it in my waking hours! I wonder if the old miller is still alive. Dear old man! his head was white as snow, and his step feeble with age, when I used to tease him by hiding behind the meal bags, while he went up and down, looking for me in every direction.”

“Yes,” said her aunt. “Old Roger Gray is still living, but he is not able now to attend to the mill. His son lives with him and does the work, and there are several little children now to play bo-peep with the grandfather when he totters down to his old favourite place.”

The cottage of Mrs. Ellison was just in sight of the mill, and was, as Ellen had said, quite a romantic little spot.

The house was almost covered up with trees; and a charming water-fall formed by the rushing of the brook over some rough ledges of rocks, made music to the half frightened birds, as they stooped to dip their bills in its white foam. A rude little bridge, thrown, directly over the torrent, led to the house.

“Is not that rather a dangerous neighbourhood for one who is without sight?” said Ellen, as they stopped to admire the mimic cascade. “It makes even me a little giddy to cross it with that rushing stream so very near.”

“You will see when you know our Ruth,” returned Mrs. May. “She has invisible guardians to keep her in the straight and narrow path both really and figuratively, I think. And for the rest, there are so many that love Ruth and

desire her company, that she seldom wanders forth alone."

But, to their great disappointment, Ruth was not at home. "This was the afternoon of the little missionary society which Ruth had formed of the young girls in the neighbourhood, her grandmother said, "and the school-house being vacant on Saturday afternoon, they had chosen that for their meeting."

Mrs. Ellison was a venerable old lady, whose silver locks had been frosted by many winters. She did not recognize in the tall, graceful young lady who was presented to her, the blooming little Ellen of former years, but she received her as well as the rest of her visitors with great pleasure. Although their number was not small, she managed their reception without much bustle; and was

not annoyed when the lively children, unfatigued with their walk, preferred a run in the beautiful flower garden in front of the house to a quiet seat within it.

“If Ruth were here she would be delighted,” said the old lady, reseating herself in the high-backed rocking-chair, from which she had risen to receive her guests; “and she could tell them many more things about the bees and flowers than I can. She sits and studies them for hours sometimes, as if she were reading a book.”

“Does she never seem to be sad that she cannot see them?” said Ellen. “I should think she would like to know how they look, and what colours they have.”

“As to the colours, she knows them apart just as well as you or I would, my dear. The good God who has brought her

into the world without the sense of sight, has made the other senses so delicate and acute in feeling, that her loss is made up to her by the greater capacity of the rest; and after she has once been made acquainted with the shape and appearance of any substance, she knows it again by the touch just as you would by looking at it. Her friend and companion, Lucy Evans, who has been with and loved my Ruth from early childhood, seems as if she performs the business of introduction to her when she describes and names the flowers; and then my dear child draws her little delicate fingers over them, and commits them to memory like a lesson. She says also that although she cannot see the flowers she loves, yet their fragrant smell, and the balmy air that touches her forehead, are blessings

to her; and she receives them as gifts from that bountiful Father, who has been so kind to her in her affliction."

"But she cannot always be out among the flowers, neither are the skies always fair; and how then does the time pass with your dear grandchild?" said Mrs. May, who, although she was intimately acquainted with the habits of Ruth, wished to draw her aged relative out on the subject for the benefit of her young companion.

"Oh, Ruth is never at a loss for employment," resumed Mrs. Ellison. "When not engaged in more active work, she has her needle-work or knitting, and then her books take up a great deal of her time."

"Books!" exclaimed Ellen. "Oh, yes, you mean those with raised letters. I

have seen specimens of them sometimes, but I should like very much to see any one reading in that strange way."

"She reads them with her fingers," said Mrs. Ellison, "just as rapidly as you would follow the letters with your eyes. How thankful we ought to be that God has put it into the hearts of benevolent individuals to provide such a mode of instruction for those who would otherwise be so helpless! Ruth has also learned many other ways of improving her time, which she applies to good purposes; for my dear child seems anxious to do all she can for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom. A part of her work is always laid by for sale, and the money, which is given for them by those who are curious in such matters, is kept in her missionary box, and its contents scrupu-

lously devoted to the cause so dear to her heart."

Mrs. Ellison, at her visitors' request, exhibited some specimens of Ruth's industry, such as baskets, mats, tidies, &c., and the little box was made heavier by the generous purchases of Ellen, who was delighted with the work. They then followed the children to the garden; the old lady first leaving orders with her ancient domestic Jenny to prepare some of her delicious bread and honey, together with fruit and cream, for the entertainment of her young friends on their return.

"That is Ruth's hive," said Mrs. Ellison, pointing to one that stood a little apart on the stand appropriated to her bees; "but she calls it her missionary hive, and the produce is applied to the same purpose as the rest of her little

possessions. She also has her own portion of the garden; and finding that the ladies of the neighbouring village set much value on cut flowers, she arranges them with considerable taste, and thus adds another mite to the Lord's treasury. But you should see my Ruth, dear miss Ellen, and then I am sure you would love her. Why not extend your walk, and visit her little missionary society?"

"I assure you we should do so with pleasure," replied Ellen, "if we were not afraid of being in the way."

"Oh, there is no danger of that," said the good woman. "Ruth has such an humble, gentle spirit, that she seldom appears affected by circumstances that would annoy others. Besides I could scarcely imagine her dear Mrs. May to be otherwise than welcome, whenever she could be so happy as to meet with her."

It was therefore arranged that, after partaking of Mrs. Ellison's tempting repast, the children should return home with Martha; while Mrs. May and Ellen continued their walk in the direction of the school-house.

CHAPTER IV.

THIS, like most of the buildings in the vicinity, had that venerable appearance, which, however it may detract from real comfort, affords many charms to the admirers of the picturesque. It was built of rough hewn logs, from between which the plaster chinking had in many places decayed and fallen out; while the immense stone chimney that had its solid foundation even with the base of the building, loomed up on one side like an ancient buttress designed to strengthen and support the whole structure. Before the door a beautiful elm waved low its feathery branches, as if it loved to listen to the merry voices of the little children,

as, gathering around its knotted trunk, they arranged their little playhouses with bits of painted china and acorn cups. But the busy hum of the week's labour or pastime was stilled; and the trembling leaves kept time instead to the music of devout young hearts, as on the clear calm summer air rung out those thrilling lines:

“From Greenland's icy mountains,” &c.

Mrs. May and Ellen paused until the last tones of the beautiful hymn had floated far away into the distance; and then moving forward to the open door hastened to present themselves to the youthful company. This consisted of an interesting group of girls, their ages apparently varying from twelve to sixteen; while their fair and favourite Ruth, whom they all seemed to love and admire, was seated in the midst of them. The appear-

ance of this lovely young person seemed to Ellen Dale remarkably sweet and attractive. Although not regularly beautiful, her features had that pure and innocent expression, which is seldom exhibited except in very young children; and the almost transparent delicacy of her complexion affected the beholder with a sense of her extreme fragility: as if upon the fair young brow was written the sentence that dooms all earthly treasures, "Passing away." Amid the bright smiles and glances that went round the happy circle, those eyes alone were veiled; and yet their want of intelligence was almost made up by the quick mobility of the beautiful mouth, as its expression varied with every change of feeling.

Her meeting with Mrs. May was that of a fondly beloved child and its tender

parent; and when Ellen was named to her, she passed her small fingers carefully over her hair and features, as if to become acquainted with her; and then taking both her hands in hers, pressed them to her forehead and lips. Ellen impulsively responded by clasping the sweet young creature in her arms, and returning with ardour the caresses she had received.

After they were all seated, and had examined the different articles of fancy work, which engaged the attention of the young people, Mrs. May requested that they would proceed in every particular in the same manner they would have done had she not been present.

“We did not design to interfere with your arrangements in any way,” she said; “so if we find you are all going to be silent, we shall think ourselves to be intruders, and must hasten away.”

“ Oh ! no, no ! dear Mrs. May,” plead Ruth, “ we are all so glad to have you come. If it will give you any pleasure, we will go on with our conversation as we planned at first to do. When we commenced our little society, we thought it would be pleasant if each one would try to remember something to tell about the condition of the heathen, or the promises concerning them in the Bible. This we thought would be more profitable, than to enter into the discussion of our own or our neighbours’ affairs, which would otherwise be the case.”

“ A very admirable arrangement !” said Mrs. May. “ I wish your example might be followed by other societies which have the same great object in view. But who is to begin ?” “ O Ruth,” “ Ruth,” and “ dear Ruth,” cried many young voices ;

and so after a few minutes' thought, the blind girl commenced in sweet low tones the following little narrative :

“ It may be on account of my being blind myself, and so knowing how sad it must be for those who have enjoyed the blessing of sight to be deprived of it, that I took such a great interest in a little story which was read to me the other day. I cannot remember the very words, but I will tell you in my own. Once a little boy, who belonged to a tribe in South Africa, was very sick. Now when we are ill, our parents and dear friends are so kind, and do everything they can for our relief. They give us medicine and nice food if we are able to take it ; and if we grow worse, how sad they are for fear they shall have to part with their beloved children ! But among the poor

heathen these sweet affections are never known. So poor Umatanda, the little sick boy, instead of being well taken care of, was carried by his cruel parents away off into the bushes, and left for the tigers and other beasts of prey to come and devour him. Oh! how dreadfully the poor boy must have felt! To be left there day after day, with his poor aching head and body growing weaker and weaker; and instead of expecting every moment to hear the soft footsteps of a loving mother coming to soothe his pain, to be listening in terror for the stealthy approach of the savage beasts of the forest! Then to add to the horrors of his situation, the dreadful insects of that warm country eat out his eyes, while his hands were too weak, I suppose, to defend them! But the good God had mercy on

the poor sick blind boy. Some kind missionaries found him, and took him to their home. They healed his sick body; and, though he could no more see the light of day, God opened the eyes of his mind to see the evil of sin, and showed him the way of salvation by Jesus. And so Umatanda had reason to bless God that he was not left with his natural sight to grope in heathen darkness, but was brought so early to the knowledge of the Saviour. There are many other heathen customs that are very dreadful and unnatural; do you remember any you can tell us about, Lizzie dear?" said Ruth, laying her hand affectionately upon that of a little girl who sat by her.

Lizzie blushed very much when she found herself called on next; and at first she could scarcely raise her voice so as

to be heard ; while her heart beat so fast and thick it was quite painful. But as she went on she gathered a little courage, and told a very interesting story about a poor Hindoo woman, who was obliged to leave her baby in the lonely forest, in obedience to its cruel father, who had been told that he must appease the gods by the offering. When she was about to place it in its leafy cradle," said Lizzie, "the poor little baby began to cry, and stretch out its arms to its distressed mother. Then she laid it down, but hearing its voice, turned, and would have gone back, only she heard the stern voice of her husband calling her, and she had to follow."

"Poor little thing!" said one of the girls, "and was it really left to starve, Lizzie?"

“It would have been,” she answered, “only God had determined otherwise. One of the missionaries who was traveling in that place, though the parents did not see him, looked on and saw the whole proceeding; and as soon as the woman had gone, he went and took the little baby away, and brought it where it could be well taken care of. And so it lived, and became one of the missionaries’ dear little adopted children.”

“Oh!” said Ruth, “does not that make you think of that beautiful text in Isaiah, ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee?’”

“Yes,” said Mrs. May, “human love is far inferior to that of the Supreme Being, for his is infinite and unchangea-

ble. But Lizzie's little story shows that in its natural unrenewed state the heart is desperately wicked. The heathen are indeed without natural affections, implacable, unmerciful. Not only do they leave their children in solitary places to be devoured, but they cast them into the rivers and streams which they call gods ; and they are almost taken by enormous crocodiles out of their parents' arms. Do you know, Lucy," she added, turning to the pensive-looking companion of Ruth, who sat beside her, "why christian females should do all they can for the good of the heathen?"

"Because the gospel has done so much for us, I suppose," said Lucy, in a very low voice.

"Yes," replied Mrs. May, "in heathen lands females are in the deepest degra-

dation. They are not only treated like beasts of burden, but in many instances experience worse calamities. Kept in the blindest ignorance, they are taught not only that it is right to destroy their helpless female offspring, but in many instances do it from choice, that their daughters may escape the hapless lot of their mothers. And often their miserable existence is dreadfully terminated by their being burnt alive with the dead bodies of their husbands."

"But is not that custom almost entirely abolished, dear Mrs. May?" asked Ruth.

"I believe it is in the more enlightened parts, as well as the general practice of infanticide. Wherever the gospel is preached, darkness flies before it. And to send this blessed gospel through all lands, you, my dear girls, are this afternoon lending your assistance."

“It is very little we can do,” said blind Ruth, “but I hope our offerings will do good, even if they are small. I remember once hearing about a dear little girl, who was kept by ill health from taking part with her brothers and sisters in their walks and employments. I suppose she wished to do good, for when they were gathering berries to sell, she asked them to pull branches for her and bring them where she sat, and she stripped off the fruit. And so in that slow way she gathered enough to sell, and gave the few pennies she received to the missionary fund.”

“That reminds me of something another little girl did,” said one of the company who had not before spoken.

“It was in England, in a place and at a season that water was scarce. The

little girl caught rain water, and sold it to the women who made their living by washing. She earned nearly five dollars in this way, and gave it to the missionary cause, and when she was asked in what way she would have it put down among the other donations, she said, "Call it rain from heaven, if you please."

"Such bright rain drops as that," said Mrs. May, "will fertilize the earth, and cause it to bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit to the glory of God."

Several others now took courage to mention facts concerning the darkness of the heathen world, and the efforts that had been made for the spread of the gospel; and then, as the afternoon was quite far advanced, their little presiding genius Ruth proposed that they should put by their work, and either read from

their Bibles or repeat from memory some of the promises which God has made to bring in the fulness of the Gentiles.

“You must begin then, Ruth,” said bright eyed little Kate, who was the youngest of the party. “I don’t think there is one of us knows the Bible as well as you do.”

“I should be sorry to think so, dear Katie,” said the gentle Ruth, “but if I were to begin, I should bring forward my favourite text; ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.’ John iii. 16. However, I think in the psalms and prophets there are others having a more direct bearing on the subject.”

The young people then took turns to read or repeat many verses from scrip-

ture; and by the direction of Ruth and her friend Mrs. May, they were so arranged as to be brought in according to the following order:

“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Ps. ii. 8.

“——thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.” Ps. xviii. 43.

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” Ps. xxii. 27.

“Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” Ps. lxviii. 31.

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends

of the earth." "His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun : and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed."

Ps. lxxii. 8. 17.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." Is. ii. 2.

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Is. xi. 9.

"Fear not ; for I am with thee : I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west. I will say to the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep

not back ; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” Is. xliii. 5, 6.

“ And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising, &c.” Is. lx. 3.

“ For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Hab. ii. 14.

“ And the Lord shall be King over all the earth : in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.” Zech. xiv. 9.

“ And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.” Luke xiii. 29.

Afterwards Mrs. May read to them the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah ; and they then all joined in that noble ascription to the Lamb that was slain, which is

contained in the apocalyptic vision of the beloved John. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Rev. v. 9.

CHAPTER V.

“If you will come with us to the Sabbath-school,” said Mrs. May to Ellen, as they walked to church on the morning after their visit to the youthful missionary society, “you will see something more of the efforts made by our friend blind Ruth to do good as she has opportunity. In addition to her other exertions in the blessed cause, she fulfils the duties of a faithful Sabbath-school teacher.”

“Then I shall have to blush more for myself than I did yesterday, aunt May; for although I have always admired and loved the Sabbath-school, I have never engaged in it myself.”

“And why, may I ask you, Ellie?”

“Oh, for one reason I have led such a wandering life from one relation to another, that I was never settled down in any one place long enough to take an interest in such things. And now that I have a home, I am afraid if I begin I shall not be able to instruct the children aright, and may become tired of the work, as I have seen so many do.”

“My dear child,” said Mrs. May, “the first great difficulty in the way of all such undertakings is a want of love for the work itself. But is it not a great one? When we consider how important it is that the tender minds of children should be early imbued with a knowledge of divine things, and trained for God, the effort becomes one of the greatest magnitude. We know by the annals of crime,

that Sabbath influence and Sabbath instruction have proved a check on the progress of vice and immorality ; and that of the miserable inmates of our state prisons scarcely one in hundreds has been found to be a Sabbath-school pupil. Think also that in this delightful employment you are imitating the example of Him, who when on earth took little children in his arms, and blessed them, and said, ‘ Suffer the little children to come unto me.’ But another difficulty in the way of successfully teaching Sabbath-school, and one that discourages many a teacher after entering the work, is want of faith.”

“ Indeed, dear aunt, I cannot see why.”

“ That is because you have never been a Sabbath-school teacher, my dear. Many engage in this employment from a love

of novelty or change. Being therefore destitute of love for the souls under their care, they cannot be expected to have faith in God's promises that He will own and bless his work. But even truly pious and faithful teachers often feel discouraged when they find their success but small, and almost determine that they will no longer continue to labour in the barren soil. But if they had faith in God's word, they would redouble their zeal and efforts. If they truly believed that God is waiting to bless, they would look to be blessed. It is because we are unbelieving that we are so slow in asking the fulfilment of promises. I hope, dear Ellie, when you become a Sabbath-school teacher, you will have love and faith, and then you may hope for a blessing."

"So that will make up the three

christian graces, dear aunt," said Ellen, smiling; "but look ! there is blind Ruth before us with her young friend Lucy. Does she help her teach Sabbath-school, aunt May ?"

"No, Ellen. Strange as it may appear of one who has been so constantly a friend and companion of dear Ruth, and the daily, almost hourly witness of her earnest piety, Lucy has not yet become decided to be a christian. But I think she is thoughtful, and yesterday I observed several times that there were tears in her eyes. She has a bright example in our dear Ruth, and is one of the members of her Sabbath-school class."

"Indeed !" said Ellen. "I should have supposed you would have given her a class of little children, rather than one composed of girls quite of the same age as herself."

“There is where you are mistaken in two ways, Ellie. First, for doubting, as your words imply, the capacity of Ruth to teach those of a larger growth; and secondly, for supposing, should such be the case, that inferior teaching is good enough for the little ones of the flock. I believe this is a common mistake, and that young and inexperienced teachers are most generally intrusted with the smaller classes, to instruct and interest whom you would confess to be a difficult undertaking, if you could be persuaded to try it. But where the young teacher is assisted or followed by one more experienced, the difficulty is in some degree removed. The way Ruth became a Sabbath-school teacher was this. She with others of her age composed my class at a time when it became necessary for

me to accept of another post of duty. Not readily finding a substitute as teacher, I proposed that they should still continue to meet and study the scriptures; and although Ruth did not accept the name of teacher, yet her accurate acquaintance with the Bible and its doctrines has gained her the position in reality; and she fulfils her duties with that gentle humility, which sweetly characterizes all her actions."

They had by this time arrived at the neat Gothic church, whose commodious basement afforded such ample convenience for the Sabbath-school. The little groups that had been seen from a distance threading shady lanes, and crossing the green lots and woodland slopes, were seated in order in their classes, with the smiles just enough sobered on their sunny

cheeks to suit the gravity of the place. At the sound of the superintendent's bell they all arose, and with clear, tuneful voices joined to sing:

“There is a happy land,
Far, far away ;”

and as the choral sounds floated by, they seemed to be the echo from that world of bliss,

“Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day.”

After the business of the school had commenced, Ellen seated herself by the class of the blind girl, in whose proceedings she had begun to take quite an absorbing interest.

With a sweet, earnest voice their youthful teacher mentioned, that the lesson on which they were to be engaged, though occupying a very small portion

of the word of God, was of the greatest importance, and demanded their most serious thoughts. "Will one of you please to read the words?" she said, turning to the rest of the scholars.

Opening her Bible, a young girl read the similitude which our Saviour employs in comparing the kingdom of heaven with earthly things.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

After a slight pause, Ruth spoke again.

"We are to consider three things in this parable. First, the character of the person mentioned; then the precious object which he found; and lastly, the sa-

crifices which he made to obtain possession of it. Who was the man here spoken of?"

"A merchant or trader," cried several voices.

"What was his business?"

"To obtain goodly pearls for the purpose of selling them again."

"In the course of his search what did he find?"

"A pearl of such rare value, that he considered all his worldly goods of no account, and consented to part with them all that he might obtain it."

"Now, dear friends and companions," said Ruth, "this parable, like all others of our blessed Saviour's, has a spiritual meaning, which we must endeavour to find out, so as to make it profitable to our own souls. How then do we resemble this merchant-man?"

“We are all trying after some worldly good,” said one.

“Yes,” answered Ruth, “we are all seekers. Some are seeking for riches, some for honours, some for fame, and all alike for happiness. All men are saying, ‘Who will show us any good?’ How blessed is it when the one petition of the heart arises: ‘Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.’ But in this earnest seeking of the world for earthly things, no toil is thought too great, no care too severe. The man of wealth will arise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness that he may add to his stores; and the man of ambition has his brow furrowed with premature age. These are the perishing pearls of earth. But what do the scriptures tell us we must seek?”

“The salvation of our souls—an interest in Christ—true religion—” replied several voices.

“Yes. It says, ‘Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.’ But we must not only seek, but strive—must *agonize* to enter the strait gate. ‘Casting aside every weight, and the sins that most easily beset us, we must *press* forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.’ ‘So *run*, that ye may obtain.’ Thus having received a knowledge of the pearl of great price, we must do all we can to obtain it. What is Christ said to be in the Bible ?”

“The chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely.”

“Then to be joined in everlasting love to him, to have him for our Friend and

Redeemer, must be the one supreme object of our desires. In comparison with this all earthly pleasures should be as nothing, and we should be willing to give up all we have and are to him. How then shall we obtain the pearl of great price ?”

“By giving up our lives for his cause ?” asked a youthful voice.

“We are not called on to do so in these days. Had we lived in the times of the martyrs, we might have been tried as they were. But even this would not have been enough, ‘for though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, or love, it profiteth me nothing,’ says the apostle.”

“We must give up all that we have of worldly goods,” suggested another.

“No—these things are not improper,

if used aright, and to the glory of God. But we must not love them supremely. There is another thing God would have."

"We must give him our hearts."

"Yes; he says, 'My son, give me thy heart.' That is, its affections, its purposes, its desires must be set on heavenly things. Now let us bring this lesson home to ourselves. What will we give for this pearl of great price? Will we give our hearts to God now in our youthful days? Will I? Will you?"

As the solemn question went round that little circle, various were the answers returned. Some replied only by tears; others hoped with their young teacher that they had given their hearts to Christ; but when it came to the turn of Lucy Evans, she answered seriously and firmly — "I will."

The fair cheek of the blind girl flushed with emotion as she heard the decision of her friend. The unexpected reply sent a thrill of sudden joy through her frame; and as her trembling fingers and quivering lips pressed those of her dear companion, she felt something of that heavenly delight which animates the angelic throng, when an heir of glory is born into the Redeemer's kingdom.

"You have made me very happy to day, dear Lucy," said Ruth Ellison, as the two friends wandered in the calm Sabbath evening down by the rustic bridge and the bright torrent. "How have I longed for this decision! Indeed, dear friend, I have sometimes felt as if I could willingly die, if but my death might be the means of leading you to God."

“I have been almost afraid to tell you, my Ruth,” said Lucy, as she passed her arms still closer around her friend, “and even now I have no clear assurance that I am accepted in the Beloved. So much sin is mixed with all I do, that I sometimes doubt if I have any grounds for hope at all.”

“Dear Lucy, then are you just such a one as the Saviour invites. He says, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ ‘The publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, crying, God be merciful to me a sinner.’ You do not doubt the promises of God.”

“No, for they are yea and amen.”

“And has he not said, ‘Seek ye my face,’ and ‘they that seek me early shall

find me?' 'Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.' And you cannot doubt that he is able to save."

"He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

"Then he is willing, and able, and just such a Saviour as you need. His grace is sufficient for you; for he first wills you to be his, and then inclines you to come. So if you truly repent of your sins, and, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as an all-atoning Saviour, desire

to live to his glory, he will not cast you off."

"Well, dear Ruth," said Lucy, brushing away some bright tear drops, "I cannot yet see my way through the dark cloud, but I know there is a silver lining to it. And though fearing and doubting, I trust to be able to say with queen Esther, 'I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish.'"

Then pacing back and forth in the soft moonlight, the two fair young girls sung sweetly those plaintive lines:

Come, humble sinner, in whose heart,

A thousand thoughts revolve ;

Come, with your guilt and fear opprest,

And make this last resolve :

I'll go to Jesus, though my sin

Hath like a mountain rose ;

I know his courts, I'll enter in,

Whatever may oppose.

I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives ;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.

Prostrate I'll lie before his throne
And there my guilt confess,
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone,
Without his sovereign grace.

Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But, if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.

I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try :
For if I stay away I know
I must for ever die.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE than a year passed by before Ellen Dale had an opportunity to revisit the pleasant home of her aunt May. During this time, Mrs. May heard from various sources of the ardent interest which her young relative had begun to take in the various objects of christian benevolence; and she prepared to welcome her as no longer a babe in divine things, but one who was rapidly attaining the full stature of spiritual maturity.

It was on the afternoon after her arrival, when, after making many inquiries about friends and neighbours, Ellen suddenly exclaimed,

“But our dear blind Ruth, aunt May

—you have told me nothing about her yet. It has been in my mind several times to ask for her, but some one else always came in her place.”

A shade passed over Mrs. May's quiet features.

“Our dear Ruth—” she said at last; “Yes—I may say it is well with her; for she is drawing nearer and still nearer to her heavenly home.”

“Indeed!” said Ellen, in a tone of concern. “Has she long been ill?”

“She has never been what is called seriously ill; but her strength has seemed gradually to fail, and without visible ailment the slender silver cord of life is gently breaking away. This morning I received a pressing message from her, with an intimation that not only her days but her hours are numbered.”

“So soon !” exclaimed Ellen, “then we must go at once—that is, if you will permit me to accompany you. Indeed—indeed, dear aunt, I do not now feel that dread I once had of seeing the immortal spirit putting off its mortality.”

“There is nothing to dread, dear Ellie,” said her aunt. “Although we must always feel a solemn awe in the presence of such scenes, yet the departure of our dear Ruth is one so peaceful and quiet, that we have no reason to shrink from the interview.”

Ellen did, however, feel a weight upon her spirits during their walk, which kept her unusually silent and thoughtful. Although “the melancholy days had come, the saddest of the year,” yet under any other circumstances she would have been delighted with the rich colours of

the forest scenery ; and have occupied herself with gathering the scarlet bush-berries, or searching after the glossy brown nuts that lay hidden beneath. But as it was, she went on through the crisp and rustling leaves with a burdened heart, feeling as if the perishing things around her told a tale of death ; and that the soft south wind, as it wailed through the trees, sung a requiem to the parting spirit of the gentle girl, who had so often loved to feel its sweet breath.

“Look above, Ellie,” said Mrs. May, who could not but notice the pensive looks of her young companion. “Look up to the heavenly hills, from whence cometh the Deliverer. If the decaying objects around us speak of the mortality of the body, the clear blue heavens above tell us of the soul’s immortality—for bound-

less as they are in extent are the hopes of the christian. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

When they reached the cottage, the aged grandmother came forward to meet them, and a silent greeting was given and received. But this lasted not long, for she loved too well to speak of her darling, and her burdened heart longed to vent itself in words.

"Our dear Ruth is almost home," she said, "and I shall soon be left alone. I had not thought it would be thus, that the withered branch should remain, while the sweet flower is nipped in the very bud. But it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

"And it is for wise purposes he wills it," replied her friend. "In covenant

love he is about taking your dear child from a world of sin and sorrow into his bright paradise above. Let us not dwell too much on the state of the perishing body. Think of the mansions of eternal bliss prepared for those who love God—think of the unspeakable weight of glory—think of that happy moment when the freed spirit, unfettered by its house of clay, shall find itself for ever with the Lord.”

Just then a few soft, low tones were heard of a plaintive melody; and Mrs. Ellison, rising and opening a wainscotted door, ushered her friends at once into the chamber of death. Ellen long remembered that impressive scene. The dying girl had been placed near an open window, through which the soft air came laden with the fragrant breath of cedar and

pine that wooded the nearer hills. The smoky atmosphere hung around those in the distance, but their magnificent foliage was painted with the brightest of colours against the misty clouds, and formed a beautiful picture.

The countenance of Ruth was very sweet and placid. She was partly supported by pillows, partly reclining in the arms of Lucy, whose pale and sorrowful brow was drooped until it touched the transparent cheek and soft dark locks of her dying friend. Closely around her gathered a group of her young companions; "sorrowing most of all for the words that had been spoken, that they should see her face no more." It was at her request that they had joined in one of her favourite hymns; and now with trembling voices they sung again:

“ Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee :
Let the water and the blood,
From thy wounded side that flowed,
Be of sin the double cure ;
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil the law's demands ;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone ;
Thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling ;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace ;
Vile, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my heart-strings break in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See thee on thy judgment-throne,
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.”

Mingling with theirs, Ruth caught the tones of a beloved and longed-for voice; and stretched out her arms with an impulsive gesture to welcome her dear Mrs. May.

“You have come to see your Ruth once again, dear friend—to go with her down into the shady valley.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. May, quietly taking the place which Lucy had relinquished on her entrance; “yes, dearest, to go with you as far as it is permitted to mortal on this side of eternity. But, Ruth, there is One who will go with you to the end; who has suffered the bitterness of death for you, and taken away its sting.”

“O yes,” said Ruth, sweetly smiling, “and he *is* with me. I feel his sensible presence. His rod and his staff, they comfort me.”

“And this dark valley through which you are passing—”

“It is *not* dark—there is only the shadow of death. My Redeemer for ever took away the reality, when he conquered this last foe. And now, though the cold waves are bitter to my taste, I have glimpses of the heavenly shores beyond. Dear friend, I shall soon see the King in his beauty, and praise him for ever and ever.”

There was a sudden pause, for the dying girl was exhausted, and the shades of death were fast stealing over the beautiful features. The deep and solemn silence was only interrupted by the laboured breathing of the departing, and the tokens of grief that could not be withheld by those who loved her. It seemed to disturb the passing spirit. She

made an uneasy motion, and stretched out her hands to clasp those that were pressing near her.

“Dear grandmother—dear Lucy—dear friends—do not weep for your Ruth. She is happy—she is going to the Saviour. Live close to him—live to his glory.”

A moment after she spoke again.

“Sing to me once more—sing of Jesus—‘Jesus, I love thy charming name’—”

They sang :—

“Jesus, I love thy charming name,

’Tis music to my ear,

Fain would I sound it out so loud,

That earth and heaven might hear.”

As they sung the last lines—

“I’ll speak the honours of thy name,

With my last labouring breath ;

Then speechless clasp thee in my arms

The antidote of death—”

Mrs. May felt the slight weight that she held become heavier, a dying radiance lingered on the pallid features, and the cold lips parted with a sudden smile. Then all who were present veiled their faces in silent awe; for they knew when next they gazed on the countenance of their friend, the soul that animated it would be with the angels.

“Happy Ruth!” said Mrs. May, when the solemn scene was over; and gently laying down the inanimate form, she pressed her lips to the pale forehead. “Happy Ruth! in life and death the Lord’s! Sweet spirit! thy mission on earth is ended, and the hand that writes this memorial of thy blessed life and death, may add to it the commendation of thy Master and mine,—‘She hath done what she could.’”

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